

COLONEL CARL F. EIFLER US Army, Retired (Deceased)



COL Carl Eifler is a legendary hero of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). He enlisted in the Reserves as a private in 1928 and received a commission after completing his officer training through correspondence courses. Introduced to intelligence while working undercover as a customs agent in Mexico, Eifler uncovered a Japanese spy ring that was attempting to sway Mexico over to the Axis powers. His customs superiors ignored this information, so he reported it to his Reserve unit advisor, LTC (later GEN) Joseph S. Stilwell. This initial contact began a lifelong friendship between the two.

In early 1941, CPT Eifler received a call to active duty and took command of K Company, 35th Infantry Regiment. Then in 1942 he was suddenly assigned to the Office of the Coordinator of Information

(COI) (later renamed the Office of Strategic Services [OSS]) in Washington, D.C. GEN William J. Donovan, the COI, wanted to establish a paramilitary unit in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater, but Stilwell, the Theater Commander, opposed this. To appease Stilwell, GEN Donovan chose Eifler to train and command a group of saboteurs being sent to the CBI Theater.

CPT Eifler hand-picked the first 21 members of Detachment 101. He took the detachment through both American and British secret operations schools. He overcame COL Stilwell's opposition and began operations behind enemy lines in Burma. Detachment 101, known as the "Kachin Raiders," established radio bases and befriended local natives, recruiting, training, and employing many of them as agents. He established schools where the natives could be taught all aspects of espionage and sabotage.



**COL Carl Eifler (left) with GEN William
Donovan**

During World War II, Detachment 101 and its native agents were extremely effective behind the lines in Burma. The original detachment grew from Eifler's hand-picked 21 to more than 700 agents. Their operations involved direct action against the enemy. Besides providing intelligence, these agents rescued more than 200 downed airmen from capture, sabotaged the railway system, and cleared the enemy from a 10,000-square-mile area. They are credited with 5,428 known Japanese dead and some 10,000 wounded, while the detachment had only 22 Americans and 184 natives killed.

COL Eifler's personal courage is renowned in MI. He was awarded the Air Medal for his piloting of small unarmed aircraft over Japanese occupied, uncharted jungle. He often flew to remote airstrips behind enemy lines to contact his agents. He also flew out the first captured Japanese pilot from enemy territory. In November 1943, a B-24 bomber crashed in the Bay of Bengal, leaving nine survivors afloat. Disregarding his personal safety, COL Eifler rescued the crew in a small, untested, and unarmed vessel through 450 miles of Japanese controlled waters. For this act of bravery, COL Eifler received the Legion of Merit.



COL Eifler stands in front of a map showing part of his Far East Command in 1942. The patch is the China-Burma-India patch.

In December 1943, COL Eifler was again assigned to Washington, D.C. This time, Eifler was asked if it was possible to kidnap the head scientist working on the atomic bomb in Germany. Although this was considered impossible, COL Eifler said he could do it. Again, he hand-picked a team and began training. The plan was well into training and reconnaissance when the mission ended because of the successful testing of our own atomic bomb.

COL Eifler's next assignment was to penetrate mainland Japan by way of Korea. He recruited Korean agents from prisoner of war camps and trained them in secret operations. His agents were ready to infiltrate Japan in two-man submarines when the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Eight days later Japan surrendered.

COL Eifler retired from the Army in 1947 having sustained serious head injuries from combat operations. However, the intelligence community did not forget him. In 1951, the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) asked Eifler if he would be interested in

smuggling arms into French Indochina. He refused, saying he would do anything that would help his country, but not as an unprotected civilian. Later, the CIA asked him to go behind enemy lines in Korea with his own unit. He accepted, but CIA physicians refused to allow it, simply stating that the man had had enough. COL Eifler devoted his life to government service and, specifically, to intelligence. From his work as an undercover agent in Mexico, through his command of the Kachin Raiders, OSS Detachment 101, to the many appeals of CIA and the US Government, COL Eifler remains a legend and a hero in military intelligence.

COL Eifler was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988. During the 1997 Hall of Fame activities, Fort Huachuca dedicated the sports complex in its new academic area in honor of COL Eifler. He passed away in 2002.



Carl Eifler in his Border Patrol days, about 1929



Carl Eifler, undated photo